



APPROVED MINUTES
Idaho Soil Conservation Commission
2270 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission held a teleconference call on April 14, 2004 at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, 2270 Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, Idaho.

Chairman Reid called the teleconference to order at 10:32 a.m. Thomasson performed a verbal roll call as follows:

Members:

Jerry Reid – Chairman
Bill Whittom – Vice Chairman
J. Morgan Evans – Secretary
Tom Johnson – Member
Gary Grindstaff - Member

Others:

Jerry Nicolescu, Administrator, SCC
Brenda Thomasson, SCC
Shonna Taylor, SCC
Jeff Martin, North Snake Groundwater District
Biff Burleigh, SCC
Chuck Pentzer, SCC

RCRDP Grants and Loans

Burleigh presented twelve groundwater grant requests originating from the North Snake Groundwater District. All projects involve converting from groundwater pumping to surface water irrigation - using water rented from the water district. The Groundwater District's project involves the implementation of a \$900,000 delivery system intended to replacement spring water irrigation in the Hagerman Valley. Irrigators have been dependent on a spring water supply but due to recent disputes, alternates are necessary.

Because of the difficulties of litigation, questions have been raised as to how much water is actually delivered. IDWR requested that a remote monitoring station be installed to log the data on a frequent basis to provide an accounting of the mitigation that this represents. The monitoring equipment will cost about \$7,500.00 and the Groundwater District is requesting assistance from the Commission to defray the cost of this equipment. If all the conversions are completed in the spring,

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Administrator
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about 9,000 acres will be converted from ground to surface water irrigation.

The surface water is rented and is available most of the time, but not all of the time. Despite the fact that they are in a severe drought, they have been able to acquire the water to support these projects. There are about 40,000 acre-feet of replacement water available.

The conversion involves taking a groundwater only system and including the capability of using surface water irrigation. The groundwater systems would be there only as a back-up. The groundwater pumping equipment would remain in place. The total replacement water would provide about 140 acre-feet of water every day that would not be withdrawn from the aquifer. The current grants would convert about 4,700 acres.

These grants would not necessarily provide any increased economic benefit to the landowners, as they already have full access to groundwater sources. However, it would provide a reduction in electricity costs and an overall savings of irrigation water. IDWR has provided a loan for some of the costs associated with the project, but not for the monitoring equipment.

Reid asked if there was a possibility of replacing any of these grant funds. Nicolescu has been meeting with Jim Yost from the Governor's Office. The Commission will request a supplemental funding request from the legislators for consideration in January to replace these funds. Yost has strongly supported the ability to return these funds to the Commission. Grindstaff stated that this is an important issue to the Governor's office. Nicolescu has explained to the Governor's office that this is about as much assistance as the Commission can offer without additional resources.

The grant requests presented were for the following projects:

Richard Trail Trust c/o Steve W. Bingham, from the Northside SWCD in Jerome for \$21,749. This project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR). The project will facilitate installing 2 ponds, three 60 HP pumps, and one 40HP pump. 6200 feet of 10-inch pipeline and 800 feet of 12" pipeline are needed to deliver surface water from the North Side Canal Company. When implemented, the project will enable use of 2.45 cfs of replacement surface water from the North Side Canal Company on 548 acres, and curtail use of 950 gpm of groundwater to reduce impacts on the aquifer with the North Snake Groundwater District.

JRM Farming from the North Side SWCD from Jerome requested \$11,803. This project will convert groundwater pumping system to 6.17cfs of surface water irrigation delivered from the North Side Canal Company to 405 acres. The land is owned by the Benedictine Monks of Idaho, and operated by JRM Farming of Jerome. The work will involve installation of two headgates, a delivery pond, 2,600 feet of 15-inch pipe, and two turbine pumps. The conservation benefits of the project will be in the replacement of pumping from a 400 HP groundwater pump to two 60 HP turbine pumps, reducing the total lift from 450 to 150 feet, with significant savings in power costs. This project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR.

Four H Farms – North Side SWCD – Jerome – request of \$6,649. This project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This application proposes to supplement and capitalize on work initiated in 2003 involving installation of an irrigation pit and mainline. Specifically, the planned work involves installation of a 60 HP pump, panel, power supply, and additional 2,600 feet of 10 inch mainline.

The project, when implemented, will reduce total pump horsepower, on the average, from 300 HP to 60 HP, and by replacing groundwater with 3.6 cfs of surface water to be delivered to 320 acres, will provide additional water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District.

Elmer Johnson – Gooding SCD – Gooding – request of \$5,399. The project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This proposal will facilitate addition of a 50 HP turbine pump and 2,200 feet of pipeline to convert from groundwater to surface water delivery, and replace a 125 HP groundwater pump. The property will receive replacement surface irrigation water in the amount of 3.0 cfs for potential use on 231 acres. The project will share in cost, the excavation of an irrigation pit with adjacent 120-acre pivot system owned by Johnson-Dewit Coop, also a conversion grant application. The pond location is on the Coop property; therefore, the two applications are interdependent.

Johnson-DeWit Coop – Gooding SCD – Wendell – request of \$3,418. The project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This proposal will assist with funding excavation of an irrigation pit and installation of

40 HP turbine pump and 800 feet of pipeline to convert from a 70 HP groundwater pumping irrigation system to surface water. When complete, the system will utilize up to 2.19 cfs of surface replacement water for two plots totaling 145 acres. The irrigation pit will also supply surface water to the adjacent pivot system which is owned and operated by Elmer Johnson. The Johnson system is also applying for an RCRDP grant, and the two projects are interdependent. The resource benefits include providing additional water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District, and also reduce power consumption and costs to irrigators.

Hill Brandsma – Gooding SCD – Wendell – request for \$2,413. The project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This proposal will assist with funding installation of a 60 HP turbine pump to substitute for a 150 HP groundwater pump in switching from groundwater to surface water irrigation. North Side Canal Co. has agreed to deliver up to 2.8 cfs of surface replacement water to the subject 140-acre plot under this proposed system. The resource benefits include providing additional water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District, and also reduce power consumption and costs to irrigators.

DeWit Dairy – Gooding SCD – Wendell – request for \$2,895. The project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This proposal will assist with funding excavation of an irrigation pit and installation of 40 HP turbine pump to convert from a 100 HP groundwater pumping irrigation system to surface water. When complete, the system will utilize up to 4.02 cfs of surface replacement water for two plots totaling 200 acres. The resource benefits include providing additional water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District, and also reduce power consumption and costs to irrigators.

Keith Wert – Gooding SCD – Wendell – request for \$4,422. This project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This project will facilitate conversion of 144 acres, one center pivot, and two corners, from groundwater to surface water irrigation source from the North Side Canal Company. An irrigation pit will be installed, plus one 60 HP pump and 320 feet of pipeline. The existing groundwater pump will have new bowls installed to enable pumping of groundwater to the pond in the event the canal company is unable to supply the water. The project, when implemented, will reduce total pump horsepower,

and supply 2.56 cfs of surface replacement water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District.

Kenneth Ruby – Gooding SCD – Wendell – request for \$2,756. This project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. This application proposes to substitute a 105 HP groundwater pumping system with two 25 HP centrifugal pumps to provide 2.67 cfs of surface irrigation water from the North Side Canal Company to 134 acres. The project will also involve installation of an irrigation pit, a headgate, and up to 225 feet of mainline. The resource benefits include providing additional water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District, and also reduce power consumption and costs to irrigators.

Jack Hirai – Gooding SCD – Wendell – request for \$2,337. This project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. The project will facilitate installing a pond, 25 HP turbine pump, 100 feet of 8 inch pipeline and a headgate to supply surface water from the North Side Canal Company. When implemented, the project will enable use of 1.38 cfs of replacement surface water from the North Side Canal Co. on 70 acres, and curtail use of 600 gpm of groundwater to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District.

Paul Borchard – Gooding SCD – Buhl – request for \$933. This project will address the problem of aquifer depletion in the Magic Valley area caused by drought. The project is part of an overall mitigation plan developed in cooperation with the groundwater districts, the spring users, and IDWR. The proposed project will assist in funding 490 feet of 15-inch pipeline from the North Side Canal to an existing irrigation pit. This pit will supply irrigation water to 304 acres through two center pivots, and substitute 4.18 cfs of surface water for groundwater currently pumped. Two existing centrifugal lift pumps will replace a 100 HP groundwater pump, and reduce power consumption and cost to the irrigator. The resource benefits include providing additional water to reduce impacts on the aquifer within the North Snake Groundwater District, and also reduce power consumption and costs to irrigators.

North Snake Groundwater District – NorthSide SWCD –Jerome – request for \$1,000.00 Grant funds will assist in purchase of a transducer, datalogger, telephone interface, and solar panel to provide continuous monitoring and documentation of mitigation water to the Sandy Pipeline Project. The information gained will facilitate management to help stabilize replacement

flows to Hagerman irrigators, and will also eliminate uncertainties in quantifying mitigation.

Grindstaff moved to approve all twelve grants for the individual amounts requested. Whittom seconded and the motion carried.

Burleigh pointed out that JRM farms is operating on land owned by the Benedictine Monks of Idaho. Reid stated that he did not believe this would be a problem.

Reid asked that the loan requests be presented. Taylor asked that Thomasson present the loan requests so that she could learn proper procedures. Thomasson presented the request of **Elmer Johnson – Gooding SCD – Gooding - \$22,300 loan – five-year term, 3% interest**, in conjunction with the grant request just approved. Whittom moved to approved pending a signed conservation agreement. Grindstaff seconded. Burleigh provided a copy of the signed conservation agreement and the motion carried.

Thomasson presented the loan request of **Kenneth Ruby – Gooding SCD – Wendell for \$10,066 – five-year term, 3% interest**, also in conjunction with the grant request just approved. Whittom moved to approve. Johnston seconded and the motion carried.

Thomasson stated that she would like to have the members consider a revision to policy at the May meeting. She is requesting that the requirement for a credit reference letter be eliminated, as securing a credit report presents a more accurate report of each applicant's financial picture. She also stated that Ambrose has been reviewing current policy and editing it for clarity and content by correcting grammar, eliminating duplications and other errors. Ambrose will have a revised policy available for review at the May meeting.

NezPerce SCD

Nicolescu reported that the Attorney General's (AG) office has almost completed the report on the NezPerce SCD. Nicolescu asked how the members would like to handle the finding of this report. Grindstaff suggested that Nicolescu meet with the board and then report back. Reid stated that he felt that the board should have the opportunity to come before the Commission. The AG's office has found grounds for one or two instances of malfeasance of office and one or two instances of neglect of duty. Evans asked if it would be appropriate to have Nicolescu and one Commission member meet with the District to review the findings. Nicolescu asked for the opportunity to review the draft with the AG and then get it to the members. At that time, the Commission would h

ave the opportunity to request that the Board meet with the Members to discuss these issues. All agreed that this was the best course of action.

SCC Office Space

Nicolescu reported that we are close to moving into our new space downstairs. He reported to the members the list of equipment and furniture that we would like to request from DFM. There is a \$75,000 cushion in personnel. Of that, we would like to request that approximately \$55,000 would be expended for capital outlay needs and \$20,000 would be available to move to T & B for help with the groundwater grants. We have sent a preliminary request to DFM to ask for approval to move these funds, but have not received a reply yet.

Additional Grant Reports

Nicolescu reported that the Governor's office has requested and received all the reports on how the groundwater grants were prepared. The Governor's will coordinate with IDWR and the Department of Commerce to model our program to loan funds for their own programs. Nicolescu also reported on the CRP program. There is a problem with the CRP, as ISDA doesn't feel this meets their crop residue rules and is exempting CRP. There is still an issue on field burning. DEQ is holding off on issuing notices of violation until the Commission can draft some guidelines for CRP field burning. We are working with the Governor's office on the engineering agreement with ISDA.

Training

Nicolescu asked for permission for Ray Ledgerwood to attend the May meeting to give a presentation on what type of training he can provide to districts. The members supported this request and Nicolescu will invite Ledgerwood to attend the meeting.

Criminal Investigation

Evans asked for an update on the proceedings against the former loan officer. There was to have been a preliminary hearing on April 5, 2004. Two hours prior to the hearing, Mr. Coburn's attorney waived the right to the preliminary hearing. So far, no additional trial or hearing date has been sent. Despite repeated calls to the prosecuting attorney's office, no return phone calls have been received yet. Grindstaff stated that when the Governor was at a groundwater meeting, he asked for comments from the floor. Grindstaff reported that he stood up and spoke and the Governor acknowledged the involvement of the Commission and appreciated the support. Evans felt that some kind of press information should be coming from the Governor's office.

Nicolescu reported that Tim Mayville has left employment at ISDA, which may impact our request to have our loan program software rewritten. Thomasson

stated that we may need one additional conference call prior to the May meeting to discuss CEC issues.

There being no further business, Reid adjourned the meeting at 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Brenda Thomasson, Management Assistant.